

Section D - Attendance

1. Each school system shall maintain a term of not less than 180 days for classroom instruction. **Tennessee Code Annotated § 49-6-3004**
2. All students must have the opportunity to attend school for 180 days of classroom instruction. Failure to comply will result in penalties against the school system. **(Note: See Kindergarten Section B-107)**
3. Attendance must be marked daily, beginning with the first day of school for both elementary and secondary school students. For example, it is not permissible to count every student who is enrolled as present the first two days of school unless the student is actually present for at least half the day. **(Note: See Kindergarten Section B-107)**
4. After the first two weeks of school, the teacher must transfer any temporary attendance records to the teacher's permanent attendance record. Care must be exercised to enter all attendance data on the correct date(s).
5. The teacher in charge of students when school convenes must mark attendance daily. This attendance record must be available for reconciliation with the absentee list or school register or computer program. The sign-in/out roster must be utilized to adjust student attendance to comply with the "state minimum school day" policy. *(See Minimum Daily Attendance Standard Section D-102)* Attendance must be kept accurately pursuant to state law. **Tennessee Code Annotated § 49-5-201, § 49-6-3004**
6. The local School board shall adopt a procedure for attendance accounting, including symbols to be used, etc., in a school system for teachers' roll books and attendance records.
7. Graduating high school seniors may be awarded credit earned during their senior year after the completion of 175 days of instruction. This waiver allows schools to prepare for and hold graduation after the 175th day of instruction. Every student (including seniors) must have the opportunity to attend school 180 days. Students not in attendance the last days of the school term must be counted absent.
8. Upon written request from the Superintendent/Director, the Commissioner of Education may authorize adjustments in the school calendar to accommodate weather-related school closures. Upon written petition from the local board of education, the State Board of Education may authorize adjustments when the operation of schools is suspended due to epidemic, natural disaster, or other justifiable cause.
9. The law does not give the Commissioner of Education the authority to waive the requirement of 180 instructional days.

D-101 Reporting Absences to Parents or Guardians

Parents or guardians must be given written notice each time a student misses five unexcused days (this means an aggregate of five days during the school year and not necessarily five

consecutive days). Additional notices must be sent after each successive accumulation of five unexcused absences. **[Tennessee Code Annotated § 49-6-3007]**

D-102 Minimum Daily Attendance Standard

A pupil in grade K-12 who is in attendance at least half of the state required minimum school day (6 1/2 hours for grades 1-12; four hours for K) shall be counted as being present for that day. A student who is in attendance less than half the state required minimum school day shall not be counted present for any portion of that day.

1. School systems should follow guidelines approved by the local school board regarding what constitutes the majority of the class period for students who leave early or arrive late.
2. In determining half the state minimum school day, the beginning of the general instructional day must be used. Neither the arrival time of school buses, departure time of school buses, nor breakfast program, shall be considered part of the instructional day. (Accounting for perfect attendance is a matter of local policy.)

D-103 Early Dismissals and Late Arrivals

1. Dismissal of students for parent conferences may not occur during any of the 180 instructional days. Students may be dismissed early for parent conferences provided that the parent conferences are scheduled in the school's master calendar and provided that the classroom instruction time is made up in full.
2. Co-op Students: Any student in a cooperative education program with a co-op training agreement signed by the school, cooperating business, the student's parents, and approved by the state may be counted present daily for the one or two hour co-op experience provided the student (1) is in attendance for at least half of the state minimum school day, and (2) attends the accompanying vocational class in the school daily. The co-op hours count toward the half-day requirement when the student attends his or her vocational class. A student with a one-hour vocational marketing class, for example, and a two-hour co-op experience attends his or her morning classes and the marketing class, meeting both half the state minimum school day and attendance in the marketing class. The student receives credit for the two-hour co-op experience for that day. However, if a student attends the morning classes but does not attend the marketing class, that student does not receive credit for that day for the two-hour co-op experience. (Only two hours of co-op can count toward membership and instructional time for funding purposes.)

It should be noted that if a student is enrolled in a co-op program, the time spent in the co-op program (up to two hours) is considered school enrollment time. The time of day actually attributed to co-op enrollment is immaterial (i.e., 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. should be treated the same as 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.).

3. Testing: Schools may dismiss students who are not taking tests on days only if the day is on the school calendar and does not count as one of the 180 instructional days. Otherwise, all students must attend school on days when the school system administers tests to selected grades or groups. Students must be counted absent if they do not attend at least half the day.
4. Inclement Weather/Minimum School Day: On a day when dangerous or extreme weather conditions arise, school must be in session half of the 6.5 hours in order to calculate ADA for that day. If a school system has met the minimum requirement for half the state minimum school day and must dismiss for inclement weather, the day does not have to be made up. However, if school must be dismissed because of inclement weather prior to the school system's having met the half-day requirement, the entire day must be made up.

If schools have staggered opening times for different schools and dangerous or extreme weather conditions arise, the superintendent or director may decide that the day need not be made up if any one of the schools has met the half-day requirement.

D-104 School Approved Activities

Off-campus participation or out-of-school activities shall be counted as attendance only when they are school directed, with prior approval of the local board of education, and are not otherwise in conflict with the Student Membership and Attendance Accountability Procedures Manual. A school approved activity is one that occurs:

1. ON school property. The activities must have prior approval by the local board of education.
2. OUTSIDE school property **ONLY IF** the activity is related to an instructional activity and has prior approval by the local board of education. Examples of allowable and non-allowable activities follow:

Allowable Out-of-School Activities: Field trips, school club member competitions (such as Forensics Club), athletic team participations, band contests, etc.

Non-Allowable Out-of-School Activities: Release of all students to attend athletic events, state tournaments, Fair Day; exempting students from attendance on any of the instructional days for any type of reward (i.e., magazine sales, attendance, academic, etc.)

Note: If a school releases all students for events that are non-allowable, the missed days must be made up by following the procedures for Making up days. See Procedures for Make-up Days B-105.

D-105 Religious Holidays

Any student who misses a class or day of school because of the observance of a day set aside as sacred by a recognized religious denomination of which the student is a member or adherent, where such religion calls for special observances of such day, shall have the absence from that school day or class excused and shall be entitled to make up any school work missed without the imposition of any penalty because of the absence. **[State Board of Education Rules, Regulations and Minimum Standards 0520-1-3-.03-(15)]**

D-106 Pre-Kindergarten

School systems must keep attendance records for pre-kindergarten students at the school level. Pre-kindergarten students should not be reported to the State on the membership and attendance reports for K-12.

All pre-kindergarten students (3-5 years of age) who are receiving special education services, regardless of the option of service, should only be reported on the Special Education Average Daily Membership by Primary and Secondary Options.

D-107 Illegal Reporting of Attendance

Systems may establish policies that include opportunities for students to attend make-up sessions outside the regular school day in order to regain credit/time lost due to absence from school. However, if a student is absent from school, he/she is considered absent for ADA purposes. To direct teachers to change attendance reports when a student was actually absent is a violation of **Tennessee Code Annotated § 49-5-201** which states that teachers shall record accurately the number of pupils present and the number absent each day.

D-108 Hardship Cases

Hardship is determined by local board policy and/or court order.

Attendance accounting for the student who qualifies as a hardship case will be on the basis of the number of courses the student takes. For example, the student who is working to support the family income due to a death of one or both parents, is enrolled in one course (1 unit of credit), and is present will be counted as present for 1/6 of the day; a student enrolled in 2 courses (2 units of credit) and is present, will be counted as present for 2/6 of the day; a student enrolled in 3 courses (3 units of credit) and is present, will be counted as present for 3/6 of the day; a student enrolled in 4 courses (4 units of credit) and is present, will be counted as present for 4/6 of the day, etc.

